

## **November 6, 2012 Presidential General Election**

Before the sun comes up on Tuesday, Nov. 6, thousands of employees of the San Bernardino County Elections Office will gear up for an exciting day serving 855,971 voters in the 2012 Presidential General Election.

After the sun comes up on Wednesday, Nov. 7, more than 4,000 employees will have served the County's voters. For some of employees, it will amount to a 24-hour work day.

San Bernardino County is a unique challenge for the Elections Office because it is the largest county by land mass in the continental United States. We have voters living from the California-Nevada border on the north end of the County to Chino Hills on the western edge – more than 20,000 square miles.

The Elections Office normally operates with a full-time staff of 24 people, but we grow into the thousands on Election Day with the addition of temporary workers.

On Election Day, many employees start at 5:30 a.m. to open our phone banks. We hired 135 operators trained to take calls from voters, poll workers, and support teams who are out in the field to make sure polls are opening on time.

“The first thing we want to do the morning of Election Day is to make sure all of our poll workers have arrived at their polling place and they have got their equipment and are ready to open at 7 a.m.,” said Terry Kouba, Director of Operations for the Elections Office. “At that point, we are in troubleshooting mode and getting our polling places opened.”

Sometimes poll workers are running late or get sick or they don't have the equipment they need. The Elections Office is ready to answer those calls with reserve workers and ready for our 53 field support personnel to respond with equipment.

Audilia Lozada, manager of the Election Worker department, said she has reserve poll workers on notice if someone needs to step in and take over.

The Elections Office hired 3,700 poll workers to process voters. Poll workers are prepared for more than 300,000 voters to show up at the polls.

“If somebody gets sick or drops off we will have staff to fill,” she said.

### **POLLS OPEN**

At 7 a.m. the polls open and the volume of calls to our office will begin to rise.

The questions most voters ask us is what time do the polls open and close, if they are registered to vote and for help finding their assigned polling place.

“We have tripled the capacity of our phone lines - 97 voter hotline phones and 46 poll worker hotline - will be up and ready for Election Day to handle thousands of calls,” said Roy Trules, Customer Relations Coordinator for the Elections Office.

If a question can’t be answered by our phone bank operators, they are trained to input all voter and poll worker questions into a database so a response team can attend to their needs in a timely manner.

In addition, there are 18 people from our Voter Records Department answering questions about registration and voter records throughout the day.

“Some people only vote once every four years and they need the most help,” Kouba said. “They don’t vote in every election so they are not sure where to go. In a presidential general election, there are a higher number of provisional voters.”

Aside from voting at the polls, the Elections Office hosts early voting throughout the day.

The Communications team is also ready to conduct tours for the public, media, campaign staff and election observers throughout the day. Prior to the election, the team helped process campaign filings for more than 400 candidates and conducted outreach to campaigns, community groups and the media.

“We want everyone to know what we are doing to put this election together, so we welcome anyone who wants to be a part of the excitement on Election Day to come watch the process,” said Felisa Cardona, Communications Manager.

Throughout Election Day, our Logistics team - made up of 150 employees - will pick up mail ballots at 55 locations throughout the county, including the offices of all city clerks and County libraries. About 2 p.m. on Election Day, Logistics will be gathering the last round of mail ballots to process through our counting machines.

“We’ve been getting about 14,000 mail ballots every day in the final days leading up to Election Day,” Kouba said.

When the polls close, our Logistics team will also be busy receiving crucial poll worker equipment – such as voter rosters - that were distributed earlier in the week to 21 different depots all over the County. The depots are one-stop supply shops for 444 polling places throughout the County.

Back at the Elections Office, our Election Technology team will continue to count the last of the mail ballots that arrive on Election Day. The team began processing and counting ballots on October 26. The results for mail ballots counted up to Election Day will be announced on our web site [www.sbcountyelections.com](http://www.sbcountyelections.com) at 8:15 p.m.

## **POLLS CLOSE**

At 8 p.m., the polls close and Election Night begins with the counting of ballots brought in from polling places all over the County.

A line of trucks and cars containing ballots will fill the back dock of the Elections Office where hundreds of workers are ready to process them.

Ballots coming from the farthest points in the county –Needles, Trona and Big River - will be flown by airplane to the Rialto Airport. Then, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department will fly the ballots from there to San Bernardino by helicopter.

There are 50 employees, most of them temporary workers – who are dedicated to processing mail ballots on Election Day. Another 50 are dedicated to processing ballots from polling places that come into the Elections Office after the polls close.

“We check them to see if there is no damage and no stubs and so they go right into the room for the counting,” Kouba said. “We expect over 2,000 boxes of ballots on Election Night.”

The Elections Office estimates that over 40,000,000 mail ballots could be dropped off at polling places on Nov. 5 and Election Day.

This year, 42 percent of the County's voters requested mail ballots. By November 4, 171,750 mail ballot voters – had returned their ballots.

## **THE COUNT**

Since 2007, there have been changes to our election system, moving from an electronic voting system to paper ballots.

Kouba says he hopes the change in procedures will lead to a faster count this election. In the 2008 Presidential General Election, the count was not completed until noon the next day.

“I think we are going to see a big improvement,” he said.

In the back warehouse of the Elections Office, ballots from polling places are received in green boxes and separated from mail ballots in yellow boxes and provisional ballots in red boxes. The mail and provisional ballots received on Election Night won't be counted until all polling place ballots are run through our machines.

When the polling place ballots come into the warehouse, a team of two election workers record the time the box came into the warehouse, then open the box, remove any stubs and other materials and check for damaged ballots.

The ballots are then placed back in the box, sealed and weighed to determine how many are inside the box.

The ballot box is then sent to the Ballot Counting Room for processing.

As for damaged ballots, election duplication teams are assigned to read them and determine what the voter's intention was in casting their vote. The team then will follow guidelines by the Secretary of State to duplicate the vote on an undamaged ballot. There are 36 employees trained to work on the ballot duplication team.

About 3 to 5 percent of the County's ballots will have to be duplicated. Some ballots come into the elections office with too many votes, with coffee-stained ballot cards and some voters scratch out their votes when they make a mistake and the machine can't recognize who the voter intended to vote for.

The majority of ballots will make it into the high security Ballot Counting Room, designed with camera surveillance, where there are 14 machines ready to read voted ballots. These machines lack network connectivity so that they can't be hacked from external sources. The machines are manned by a three-person team, most of them temporary workers. On Election Night, a majority of our workers are temporary, meaning everyday citizens – and not just full-time employees – who are participating in the election process.

The first election results are posted at 8:15 p.m. and will consist of all mail ballot totals. The subsequent count at 10 p.m. will also consist of some of those mail ballots processed on Tuesday morning along with the count of some ballots from nearby polling places.

The midnight count will include more polling place ballots and the count will continue every two hours until completed.

Even if the count is completed by Wednesday morning, it doesn't mean the election is over.

The results are considered semi-official until a canvass of the election is done to balance the books and make sure all votes were accurately counted. The canvass must be completed 28 days after the election.